



Late Backup

90

CURB CUTS AND SIDEWALK ACCESSIBILITY

The Americans with Disabilities Act became law in 1990. The ADA required that a transition plan be implemented in 1992 and all of construction accessibility improvements be FINISHED by 1995. The City of Austin has made a great deal of progress in the area of sidewalk accessibility but much remains to be done

The City Council approved funding for a Pedestrian Master Plan in the 2002-2003 budget cycle. The Pedestrian Master Plan is being used as a tool for an inventory of current and future projects. It is making prioritization and funding for future projects easier and more efficient because it will be used to coordinate projects of all public entities responsible for providing access to sidewalks. Those entities are the City of Austin, Capital Metro, Travis County and Texas Department of Transportation.

ADAPT of Texas is very concerned about the fact that there is no money in the City Manager's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 08-09 that will address sidewalks on major roadways. The Pedestrian Master Plan can only result in accessible sidewalks if the City Council funds ADA Sidewalk Improvement Projects at an appropriate level. Some areas remaining on the list are: Burnet Road, South Congress near Stassney and North Lamar from Rundberg to Rutland. Some of these areas have been on the list since 1993. They are all very busy and very dangerous roadways. Sidewalks in these areas needed to come into compliance yesterday.

City Manager Ott has stated publicly on several occasions that there is \$1.2 million of GO Bond money in the budget to address sidewalk accessibility but this is misleading. GO Bonds are currently focused on residential areas where roadways are being resurfaced. The City Manager either is not aware of that policy or he has chosen to engage in political spin not recognizing his policies are a threat to the safety of pedestrians with mobility impairments, public transit riders, and pedestrians in general. The current draft of the proposed budget recommends spending \$1.8 million on parking space management. Why does Mr. Ott feel that parking space management is more urgent than the safety of his fellow citizens? There is an additional line item in the budget that could help fund this essential service. It is something called transfers and other requirements. Those funds add up to a combined total of \$7,552,104. Why is this prioritized higher than ADA compliant sidewalks?

ADAPT believes that City Council and staff should take a closer look at each line item in the budget to find the funds necessary to address the lack of sidewalk access. We believe that, at the very least, the city should use the rebate it has received from the Texas Department of Transportation for toll roads coupled with the interest from GO Bonds to fund sidewalk improvements for major roadways.